

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

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MAY 6, 1836.

Read, ordered to be printed, and that the committee be discharged from the further consideration of the subjects.

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Mr. SOUTHARD made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, who were instructed by resolution to inquire into the propriety of establishing a navy yard at Baltimore, and to report their opinion to the Senate, report :*

That they have called upon the Secretary of the Navy to communicate to them his opinion, and such information as was in possession of the Department, in relation to that subject. His answer, with the documents to which he refers, are annexed, and made part of this report.

The committee have been called upon, also, to inquire into the expediency of establishing navy yards at one or two other points upon our coast, and their reflections have led them to the conclusion that it is not expedient, at this time, to increase their number. We already have seven, some of them, in the opinion of the committee, not well situated; and, although it may become necessary hereafter to increase them, yet it should be done upon some general and well-considered plan, which should have in view the economy and efficiency of the naval service and defences, rather than local convenience and advantages.

For the adoption of such a plan, the committee have not in their possession all the information which is necessary to safe and prudent action upon the subject. They ask to be discharged from the further consideration of the resolution.

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

February 16, 1836.

On motion by Mr. Kent,

*Resolved*, That the Committee on Naval Affairs be instructed to inquire into the propriety of establishing a navy yard at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, and that they report their opinion to the Senate.

Attest :

WALTER LOWRIE, *Secretary.*  
By W. HICKEY, *Clerk.*

## NAVY DEPARTMENT,

April 4, 1836.

SIR: In answer to your letter of the 21st ultimo, asking my opinion, and such information as may be in possession of this Department, in relation to certain memorials for the establishment of navy yards at Baltimore, and at Charleston, South Carolina, I have the honor to state that, on the 16th of December, 1826, the Secretary of the Navy transmitted to the House of Representatives a report on the survey of the harbor of Baltimore, (see documents of the House of Representatives, 2d session, 19th Congress, No. 13.)

From this report it appears that the harbor of Baltimore presents many advantages as a navy yard, and, in my opinion, it might be made a station for the building and repairing of ships of war, at a moderate expense, and with great advantage to the United States.

As to the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, I must beg leave to refer you to a report made on the 19th of January, 1826, to the Senate, by the Secretary of the Navy, (see Senate documents, 1st session, 19th Congress, No. 27.)

This report contains much satisfactory information as to the harbor of Charleston, and leaves but little doubt that that harbor might be judiciously selected as a navy yard for the building and repairing vessels of war, (except those of the largest classes.)

The position of that harbor, with respect to our squadron in the West Indies and Gulf of Mexico, affords a strong argument in favor of selecting it as a naval station, inasmuch as it is often important to obtain recruits of seamen, and supplies of provisions and stores for our vessels, without the inconvenience and delay of visiting our Northern ports.

There is no information in this Department beyond what is herein stated, as to the propriety of establishing navy yards at Baltimore, or at Charleston.

I am, with great respect,

Your obedient, humble servant,

M. DICKERSON.

The Hon. SAMUEL L. SOUTHARD,

*Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs  
of the Senate of the United States.*

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NAVY DEPARTMENT,

December 16, 1826.

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 14th instant, directing the Secretary of the Navy to report the result of the recent survey of the harbor of Baltimore, I have the honor to transmit a copy of the report made by Master Commandant Claxton, containing the result of the survey of that harbor.

The original chart, prepared with much care, also accompanies this report; and it is respectfully requested that it may be returned to the Department, after it has been used by the House of Representatives.

The survey was executed by Lieutenant J. W. Sherburne, under the superintendence, in the first instance, of Captain Spence; and subsequently to his death, of Master Commandant Claxton.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, &c.,

SAM'L L. SOUTHARD.

*The SPEAKER of the House of Representatives.*

BALTIMORE, November 4, 1826.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that the river Patapsco and harbor of Baltimore were, at the instance of the insurance companies of this city, accurately surveyed in the year 1817, and a chart predicated on that survey published, a copy of which I enclose. I also transmit to you a chart founded on the survey recently taken, in which will be observed a more minute examination of the river, and the several points in the harbor supposed useful for naval purposes.

In proceeding to answer your several interrogatories, in the order in which they are given, I beg leave to state that, in addition to my own observation, I have been aided by the experience of the best pilots, and the sound judgment of well-informed individuals, in obtaining the various facts called for by your letter of instruction.

1st. The depth of water upon the bar being the first point to which you have directed my attention, I reply, by stating that the highest spring tides give a depth of twenty feet, that a common tide gives nineteen feet, and the lowest tides seventeen feet of water upon the bar, at high-water mark. The average perpendicular rise of the tide is eighteen inches.

2d. The depth of water upon the bar is materially affected by particular winds; a gale from the southward and eastward forces the waters of the Atlantic into the Chesapeake bay, and produces a rise on the bar to the height of three feet above an ordinary tide, giving a depth of twenty-two feet; a gale from the north, on the contrary, drives the waters of the Chesapeake into the ocean, reduces the water three feet below the common low-water mark, and thus leaves a depth of fifteen feet only on the bar.

3d. The current in the river, when unaffected by external causes, runs at the rate of one mile and a half per hour.

4th. The channel way for beating over the bar, varies in breadth from one-third to half a mile. The bar may be said to extend for the space of nine miles, beginning at the sand knolls six miles below North point and terminating at the deep water off Hawkins's point. The bottom throughout is soft mud, with the exception of the numerous sand knolls above mentioned, having on their surface a depth of eighteen feet water. The wind from the east to southwest is suitable for vessels bound in, and from the northnortheast to southwest, when bound out.

5th. The prevailing winds are from the northwest and southeast. I have ascertained, from a meteorological table, compiled by Lewis Brantz, Esq., that the average of six successive years gave the wind from the

northwest 106 days, northeast 67 days, southeast 105 days, southwest 75 days, and 12 days of calm.

6th. The anchorage for vessels having crossed the bar, is abundantly extensive for the largest fleets.

7th. The proximity to the city constitutes, in a great measure, the "convenience for receiving supplies from the shore."

8th. Good water can be obtained at various watering places now established in the harbor, and which may be multiplied to any extent desired.

9th. The city of Baltimore, from its magnitude and resources, could at all times afford the necessary provisions and stores for a fleet. These may be said to be her staples.

10th. The harbor of Baltimore possesses favorable positions for a navy yard. Three sites have been examined, two only of which are deemed worthy of present consideration. The one designated on the chart by the letter A, is situated on the eastern side of the harbor, a short distance below Harris's creek. It has for its recommendation the deepest water to be found, perfectly retired by land and water, facility of transportation and intercourse with the commercial part of the city, but seated on a bank of twenty feet in height, and which gradually becomes more elevated as you recede from the river, and open by land to the incursions of an enemy.

11th. To this point, vessels drawing twenty feet water can approach to within 250 feet of the present shore.

12th. The quantity of water it can furnish is not known; but the quality of it, as ascertained from a well on the premises, is found to be nauseous to the palate.

13th. The position bears a reputation for great unhealthiness, but is supposed to be susceptible of improvement, by filling up a marshy ravine, forming its southern boundary. The soil is clay and sand.

14th. The facility for wharfing is as favorable as can be desired, with the exception of the superabundant earth, which may be disposed of in the manner suggested in the last article.

The other position, marked B, is situated on the west side of the harbor, at and below Locust point. It is situated on an extensive plane of fourteen feet elevation above the surface of the water; possesses in a still greater degree, a facility for wharfing, of transportation and intercourse with the town, is supposed to be healthy, retired in its situation, and is covered from assault by Fort McHenry, but has less depth of water, for at the distance of 400 feet from the shore, there is but seventeen and a half feet of water, and which does not materially deepen until you begin to approach the position A, on the opposite shore. This site appearing to possess great advantages in point of location, health, protection, and defence, I deem it proper to suggest that the water can be readily, and at inconsiderable expense, deepened to twenty feet, by means of the admirable mud-excavators now in operation in the harbor. The soil of this position is clay, and the bottom of the river a very soft mud.

As there are no springs or pumps in the vicinity, it is not known what may be the quality or quantity of its water; but, there is every reason to suppose that an examination would prove satisfactory. It is, however, proper to observe, that to both these positions a sufficiency of good water,

for every ordinary purpose, can be conveyed by conduits, similar to those that now supply every part of Baltimore.

15th. The worm exists in the harbor ; but, owing to the freshness of the water, is not considered destructive ; in fact, no precautionary means are adopted to protect any of the works in the harbor against it.

All which is respectfully submitted.

ALEXANDER CLAXTON.

Hon. SAMUEL L. SOUTHARD,  
*Secretary of the Navy.*



